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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: CANADA FIGHTING TRAFFICKING OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN
AND CHILDREN

REF: A. 08 OTTAWA 1546

[1](#)B. OTTAWA 151

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: Canada's federal government will provide C\$100,000 to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) to develop education and awareness programs to protect First Nations women and youth from trafficking and sexual exploitation. The grant supplements the federal government's partnership with the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) on the five-year "Sisters In Spirit" initiative (2005-2010) to prevent violence in aboriginal communities. AMC leaders have been working closely with MP Joy Smith to combat human trafficking since Smith held a November 2008 conference on trafficking in Winnipeg. AMC has also publicly endorsed Smith's private member's bill in the House of Commons to introduce mandatory minimum sentences for trafficking of minors. The NWAC database includes 510 cases of murdered or missing aboriginal women, most in the western provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On April 6, Minister of State for Women Helena Guergis announced that the federal government would provide C\$100,000 to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) to prevent the trafficking and sexual exploitation of aboriginal women and children. The funds will come from the federal Women's Partnership Fund of Status of Women Canada. The program will develop education and awareness programs and partnership networks to protect aboriginal women and youth. According to Guergis, the program would "stop the exploitation of some of our most vulnerable women and children." AMC Grand Chief Ron Evans underscored that "we know as First Nations that it is our collective responsibility to protect the most vulnerable among us." Erin Wolski, Health Director of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), a national umbrella of thirteen aboriginal women's associations, emphasized to poloff that it will be important for the Chiefs fully to involve female aboriginal leaders in their decision-making processes.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Conservative MP Joy Smith (Kildonan-St. Paul) stressed publicly that "protecting aboriginal women and children from exploitation should be our top priority," and that "after years of combating human trafficking of aboriginal women, it brings me great relief to see substantial funding for this effort." In November 2008, Smith had organized a national conference on human trafficking of aboriginal victims in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Smith and AMC Grand Chief Ron Evans have been working together to combat human trafficking since that conference, according to Smith's legislative assistant. Evans has

endorsed Smith's private member's Bill C-268, which would create mandatory minimum sentences of five years for trafficking victims less than eighteen years of age. It remains under scrutiny in the House of Commons.

¶4. (U) The federal government is also partnering with NWAC on the five-year "Sisters In Spirit" initiative (2005-2010) to improve the situation of aboriginal women (First Nations, Inuit, and Metis), and prevent violence in aboriginal communities, in particular the high rates of missing and murdered aboriginal women (ref a). The NWAC database includes 510 cases of murdered or missing aboriginal women, of whom 340 have been identified as murdered and 127 as missing. Of these, 134 were murdered and 49 disappeared since 2000. Over half of the victims were under the age of thirty. Most cases of murders and disappearances have reportedly occurred in the western provinces of British Columbia (136 cases), Alberta (85), Manitoba (69), and Saskatchewan (55).

¶5. (U) The American Presence Post in Winnipeg contributed to this reporting.

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